The "Mental" in Monumental : Battle Axe Culture in megalithic tombs in southern Sweden

Olausson, Deborah

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Herausgegeben von Martin Furholt
Martin Hinz
Doris Mischka
Gordon Noble
Deborah Olausson

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The "mental" in monumental – Battle Axe culture in megalithic tombs in southern Sweden

Deborah Olausson

Abstract

It is reasonable to consider that those who arranged the material accoutrements of mortuary practices, i.e. the burial, were making a more or less conscious statement about cultural identity. At least we archaeologists usually assume this to be so. An interesting case can be found in the mortuary practices ascribed to the Battle Axe culture from the later Middle Neolithic[1] (2800–2350 cal BC) in southern Scandinavia. When we look at burials which we archaeologists ascribe to the Battle Axe culture we can identify several variations: flexed inhumation of a single individual in a stone-lined pit (referred to as flat-earth burial), flexed inhumation of multiple individuals in a stone-lined pit, and cremation burial. Additionally, we often interpret the presence of Battle Axe artefacts and/or radiocarbon dates falling within this period in megalithic tombs as evidence that burial in such tombs was also part of the Battle Axe mortuary repertoire.

This article analyses Battle Axe culture remains in megalithic tombs in Sweden's southernmost province, Scania. The megalithic tombs were constructed c. 1000 years earlier by the Funnel Beaker culture. Do Battle Axe artefacts in the tombs represent burial activity, as many have suggested, or some other form of behaviour? If in fact they are the result of burial, we find an interesting contrast between the modest and certainly non-monumental flat-earth graves constructed by Battle Axe people, on the one hand, and the reuse of monumental megalithic monuments from an earlier era, on the other.

Evidence for Battle Axe presence is recorded at 21 passage graves and one dolmen in Scania. This evidence has been investigated regarding its reliability, context and dating. The conclusion reached is that most of the Battle Axe artefacts we find in connection with the tombs are the result of ritual activity carried out with the tomb as a focal point, rather than burial. The Battle Axe axes and the pottery found in connection with the tombs are damaged, in some cases apparently deliberately so. At Gillhög we saw that the battle axe and fragments of eight axes could be refitted, indicating they were brought to the tomb as whole objects or at least in a less fragmentary state. Similar behaviour has been demonstrated at other Battle Axe culture sites such as Kverrestad and Svartskylle, where there is extensive evidence for deliberate destruction through mechanical means and/or fire but not associated with mortuary activity (Larsson 2000). It would appear that there certainly was some kind of "mental" awareness of the imposing megalithic tombs on the part of the members of the Battle Axe people. The tombs functioned as a focal point for ritual activity, in one instance perhaps the tomb "attracted" a flat-earth burial, as can be seen at Stendösa. However, in my opinion the megalithic tombs erected by the Funnel Beaker people were not regarded as repositories for interment by members of the Battle Axe culture. The proper place for burial was in a pit under the ground, not in a monument.

1 This paper uses Scandinavian terminology. Comp. fig. 1, p. 13.

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Introduction

It is reasonable to assume that those who arranged the material accoutrements of their mortuary practices, i.e. the burial, were using them to make some statement about cultural identity. At least, we archaeologists usually assume this to be so. An interesting case can be found in the mortuary practices archaeologists interpret as belonging to the Battle Axe culture from the later Middle Neolithic (2800–2350 cal BC) in southern Scandinavia. When we look at burials which we ascribe to the Battle Axe culture we can identify several variations: flexed inhumation of a single individual in a stone-lined pit (referred to as flat-earth burial), flexed inhumation of multiple individuals in a stone-lined pit, and cremation burial. But in addition, the presence of Battle Axe artefacts and/or radiocarbon dates falling within this period in megalithic tombs is seen as evidence that burial in pre-existing tombs was also part of the Battle Axe mortuary repertoire. How are we to explain the differences in the material aspects of mortuary practices in Battle Axe burials? Could variability in burial practices reflect different identities within the so-called Battle Axe culture?

These are broad questions, not all of which can be addressed in this brief article. Instead, I wish to concentrate on one specific aspect, namely Battle Axe culture remains in megalithic tombs. The tombs were constructed c. 1000 years earlier by people with a different material culture; we label it the Funnel Beaker culture. Do Battle Axe culture artefacts in the tombs represent burial activity, as many have suggested, or some other form of behaviour? If in fact they are the result of burial, we find an interesting contrast between the modest and certainly non-monumental flat-earth graves constructed by Battle Axe people, on the one hand, and reuse of monumental megalithic monuments from an earlier era, on the other.

Background

Mats P. Malmer, generally regarded as one of the main authorities on the Swedish-Norwegian Battle Axe culture, quantified the presence of Battle Axe artefacts in megalithic tombs in his seminal work from 1962 (Malmer 1962). He concluded that Battle Axe culture type fossils were present in 12 of Scania's 56 passage graves but absent from its 31 dolmens. Although much of the contents of megalithic tombs is poorly documented, he nevertheless concluded that Battle Axe culture was present in a very large number of them (Malmer 1975, 50).

In order to determine whether the Battle Axe presence in megaliths was related to burial, he compared the number of Battle Axe pots and battle axes from megalithic tombs with the number found in archaeologically excavated Battle Axe flat-earth burials. In the latter there were 24 pots and six battle axes, compared with megalithic tombs where 20 pots and two battle axes were present. His conclusion was that Battle Axe artefacts associated with the tombs should be interpreted as burial remains, although he also pointed out that we lack any examples of undisturbed Battle Axe burials in any megalithic tomb (Malmer 1962, 246pp.; 2002, 143).

Methodology

The purpose of this article is to explore the possible meaning(s) of Battle Axe culture activity in relation to Scania's megalithic tombs. I will be challenging Malmer's assertion that the Battle Axe presence at megalithic tombs can primarily be ascribed to burial activity.

I began by compiling a list from published sources of dolmens and passage graves claimed to contain evidence for Battle Axe culture artefacts and/or radiocarbon dates from the Battle Axe period (Malmer 1962; Strömberg 1971b; Bägerfeldt 1992; Sandén 1995; Andersson 2003; Ebbesen 2006). The list (Fig. 1) comprises a total of 22 megalithic tombs; an increase of ten graves compared with Malmer's list (1962, 247).

The Scanian megalithic tombs were erected by members of the Funnel Beaker culture about a millennium prior to the emergence of the Battle Axe culture. However, the presence of type fossils belonging to the Battle Axe culture and also the Pitted Ware culture (cf. Iversen 2010) indicates the presence of members of later cultural groups at many of the tombs as well. Further, both chambers and passages were often re used as cist graves in the Late Neolithic, while artefacts from subsequent periods show that tombs continued to be sporadically used. Given the frequent reuse of the tombs, it is not surprising that contextual information is unreliable. Unfortunately, the bones, beads, potsherds and flint objects in and around the tombs are often everyday objects with only loose dating associations. Malmer (2002, 143) maintained that the only means of identifying Battle Axe culture at the tombs is by using typological criteria. Following his ideas and those of other archaeologists, I have

Name	Type	BAC presence	Interpretation
Carlshögen	Passage grave	Potsherds, three ^{14}C dates, one hollow-ground flint axe	Possible five burials
Fjälkinge nr. 9	Passage grave	One rimsherd	Deposition or loss
Fjärestad nr. 1	Passage grave	Erroneous reference to hollow-ground flint axe	Unconfirmed
Gantofta boställe	Passage grave	Sherds from two pots	Burial possible but not likely
Gillhög	Passage grave	One BAC battle axe, maximum eight hollow-ground flint axes	Intentional damage and deposition
Hög	Passage grave	Five sherds from BAC vessel	Intentional damage and deposition
Ingelstorp nr. 25	Passage grave	One ^{14}C date	Unconfirmed
Knäbäcksdösen	Dolmen	One hollow-ground flint axe	Deposition or loss
Kungsdösen	Double passage grave	One BAC sherd	Deposition or loss
Laxmans-Åkarp	Passage grave	Possible two hollow-ground flint axes	Unconfirmed
Öllsjö	Passage grave	Sherds forming a nearly complete BAC pot	Possible burial
Örenäs	Passage grave	Possible two hollow-ground flint axes, one bone ring	Possible burial or deposition
Örum nr. 5	Passage grave	Single sherds from three pots	Deposition or loss
Östra Vram	Passage grave	Rimsherds from three BAC pots	Deposition or loss
Ramshög	Passage grave	One sherd BAC pottery	Deposition or loss
Särslöv	Passage grave	One hollow-ground flint axe, sherds from BAC pot	Possible burial or deposition
Stendösa	Passage grave	One hollow-ground flint axe, one 14C date	Anl. 1 is a flat-earth BAC burial located outside the tomb
Stenhög	Passage grave	One possible hollow-ground axe	Deposition or loss
Tågarp	Passage grave	One hollow-ground flint axe, sherds of BAC pottery, one ^{14}C date	Possible burial in chamber
Trollasten	Dolmen	24 sherds from BAC pot	Possible burial or deposition
Västra Hoby	Passage grave	Poorly documented	Unconfirmed
Viktorshög söder	Passage grave	One hollow-ground flint axe, potsherds	Deposition or loss

Fig. 1. Megalithic tombs in Scania showing evidence of Battle Axe culture (BAC) and the interpretation of the evidence.

therefore considered the following objects to be indicative of Battle Axe presence: battle axes and pottery of the types identified by MALMER (1962) as belonging to the Battle Axe culture, thick-butted hollow-ground flint axes and chisels, facetted grinding stones, decorated bone rings, and type D tanged projectile points (MALMER 2002, 143; BRINK 2009, 84; Von HACKWITZ 2009, 110). BRINK (2009, 250) gives the span of radiocarbon dates for the Battle Axe culture as 4230±65 BP to 3720±65 BP.

I have attempted to ascertain the find circumstances of the objects belonging to the Battle Axe culture in order to determine the reason for their presence in each of the 22 tombs. The sources for this information include published accounts, information in the Swedish Register of Ancient Monuments (FMIS), the catalogues of the Swedish National Museum (SHM) and Lund University Historical Museum (LUHM), and records in the archives of LUHM.

Scanian megalithic tombs with Battle Axe culture artefacts and/or relevant radiocarbon dates

In the following section I provide a short history of the investigation of each of the 22 tombs where Battle Axe material was found and a brief description of the tomb and its contents. I then describe the nature of the Battle Axe evidence and conclude with an evaluation as to how it should be interpreted. The locations of the tombs are shown in figure 2.

Carlshögen, RAÄ[2] Löderup 29:1

The passage grave at Carlshögen was partially investigated by Kurck in 1875 (BAGGE/KAELAS 1952, 84). Strömberg excavated remaining portions in 1964 and 1968 and found that the contents of the passage were disturbed (STRÖMBERG 1971b, 60f.). In the

2 Register of Ancient Monuments designation.

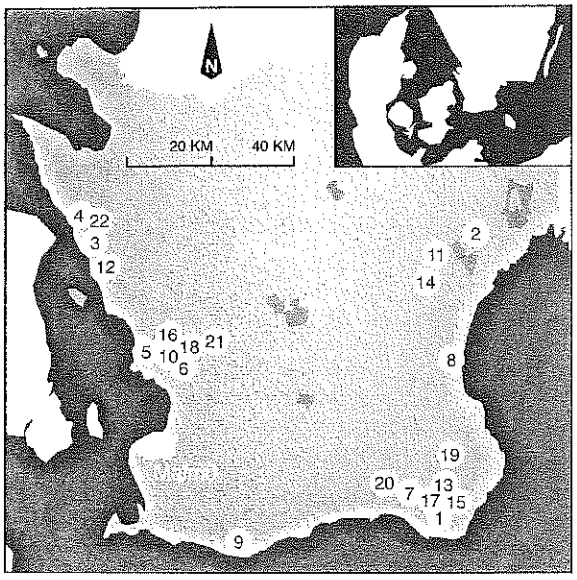

Fig. 2. Map showing the location of megalithic tombs containing evidence of Battle Axe culture. 1=Carlshögen, 2=Fjälkinge nr. 9, 3=Fjärestad nr. 1, 4=Gantofta boställe, 5=Gillhög, 6=Hög, 7=Ingelstorp nr. 25, 8=Knäbäcksdösen, 9=Kungsdösen, 10=Laxmans-Åkarp, 11=Öllsjö, 12=Örenäs, 13=Örum nr. 5, 14=Östra Vram, 15=Ramshög, 16=Särslöv, 17=Stendösa, 18=Stenhög, 19=Tågarp, 20=Trollasten, 21=Västra Hoby, 22=Viktorshög söder (graphical image: H. C. Brandstedt).

chamber she encountered seven poorly-preserved human skeletons from the Late Neolithic lying on a stone pavement (1971b, 30pp., 296). Below this was a 0.40-metres-deep layer of sand and clay which was in turn underlain by a stone pavement divided into nine sections and dated to the Middle Neolithic (1971b, 42pp.). Finally, she encountered a pit underneath the pavement which contained the remains of a maximum of seven individuals accompanied by clusters of flint objects (TILLEY 1999, 30). STRÖMBERG (1965, 6) found few artefacts at the mouth of the tomb.

Battle Axe presence is indicated by five phenomena: potsherds from a Battle Axe culture pot, three radiocarbon-dated human femurs from the relevant period, and one hollow-ground thick-butted flint axe.

The flint axe was recovered from the passage by Kurck, but unfortunately its immediate context is unclear. FORSSANDER (1933, 106) writes that the axe was found beside a skeleton and interprets it as a grave good belonging to the individual, while BAGGE/KAELAS (1952, 86) report that Kurck encountered the axe under the bones. It is unfortunate that we lack better documentation of this find, since it could be one of the few examples we have of an intact Battle Axe culture burial in a megalithic tomb.

Strömberg recovered a large number (unspecified) of sherds on the Middle Neolithic floor level in section F in the chamber and one sherd from the same pot in the passage. Many of the potsherds could be refitted, showing a pot whose form and decoration are typical for MALMER'S (1962) type D or M (STRÖMBERG 1971b, 61, 245; 1984, 52). HULTHÉN'S analysis of some of the sherds confirmed that the tempering and manufacturing techniques were comparable to what we see on Battle Axe culture pottery (1977, 144pp.; STRÖMBERG 1971b, 244pp.). Although the bones of three to four individuals were also present in section F (STRÖMBERG 1971b, 245), they were scattered and in disarray. As none of them has been radiocarbon dated we cannot determine whether or not they come from a Battle Axe individual. It is not possible to ascertain whether the pot accompanied a burial or if its presence in the chamber is a result of some other activity.

Three radiocarbon dates on scattered human bones (all femurs) fall within the chronological limits of the Battle Axe culture. One femur came from the pit under the Middle Neolithic floor level while the other two were lying on this floor in sections D and B, respectively (STRÖMBERG 1971b, 47, 50, 59).

Conclusion: If each indication of Battle Axe culture is interpreted as a burial, which is at least a theoretical possibility, we have a maximum of five Battle Axe burials in the Carlshögen passage grave. However, in no instance is there clear evidence for an association between a body and any Battle Axe type fossils.

Fjälkinge nr. 9, RAÄ Fjälkinge 12:1

HANSEN (1938) excavated the passage grave in 1927. Bones from at least 20 individuals, several of them children, were recovered from the chamber. The passage contained scattered human bones and potsherds. Animal bones, bone implements, amber beads and flint blades were also found in the tomb. Hansen recovered some 7000 potsherds from the area in front of the mouth of the passage (HANSEN 1938, 25; BAGGE/KAELAS 1950, 59).

Battle Axe presence is indicated by a single rim sherd from a type J pot found four metres northeast of the entrance in the potsherd concentration (BAGGE/KAELAS 1950, 122; MALMER 1962, 916).

Conclusion: The single Battle Axe sherd in a pottery concentration outside the tomb may be a result of deliberate deposition or loss but is not indicative of Battle Axe burial.

Fjärestad nr 1, RAÄ Fjärestad 5:1

The passage grave at Fjärestad was excavated by Almgren in 1910. EBBESEN (2006, 777) lists a hollow-ground flint axe among the finds here, but his reference to Bagge/ Kaelas is erroneous. ALMGREN (1910, 73) describes a higher floor level with later burials but the only datable finds are four flint daggers from the Late Neolithic.

Conclusion: Battle Axe presence is unconfirmed.

Gantofta boställe, RAÄ Kvistofta 12:1

According to FMIS (Kvistofta 12:1), the passage grave at Gantofta boställe was excavated by Crown Prince Gustaf Adolf in 1908.

Almgren published photographs of two reconstructed pots attributed to the Battle Axe culture in 1919 (ALMGREN 1919, fig. 10, fig. 33; cf. OLDEBERG 1952, Abb. 280). According to ALMGREN (1919, 11), the sherds from the two Battle Axe pots were found in the upper part of the chamber filling. The pots were classified by MALMER (1962, 917) as types H2 and K. Although there is very little information about the details of the context in which these pots were found, the SHM catalogue (SHM 13521) lists a number of Late Neolithic artefacts from the same layer, including two flint daggers (cf. ALMGREN 1910, 73; FORSSANDER 1933, 98), a tanged flint point and a slate pendant (cf. STRÖMBERG 1971b, 301). One unburnt piece of bone is also listed.

Conclusion: The large number of sherds from the two pots suggests an intentional Battle Axe presence in the chamber. However, the sherds occur in a context which also has a strong Late Neolithic component. My conclusion is that Battle Axe culture burial here is possible but not likely.

Gillhög, RAÄ Barsebäck 12:1

Rydbeck led excavations of the passage tomb at Gillhög between 1931 and 1933 (1931; 1932; 1935). He excavated the chamber and passage completely and investigated the stone pavement at the passage entrance. He was also responsible for two trenches in the mound (FORSSANDER 1942, 2). The contents of the chamber and the passage were disturbed and the bones in the chamber had almost totally disintegrated. Flint dagger fragments and a Late Neolithic slate pendant found at the bottom of the chamber indicated that earlier burials had been pushed aside or redeposited outside of the chamber, according to RYDBECK (1932, 36). Further evidence for disturbance was a copper coin dated to 1771 found in the upper part of the chamber filling. The lower levels in the passage were full of jumbled bones but one intact skeleton, together with part of a small Late Neolithic pot, was encountered in the outer part of the passage. RYDBECK (1932, 33, 43) found that the outermost capstone over the passage was missing and the portion of the passage nearest the entrance was filled with large stones mixed with potsherds and other artefacts. He concluded from this that both the chamber and the passage were reused as stone cists during the Late Neolithic. Two Late Neolithic stone cists were also encountered in the mound covering the passage tomb (RYDBECK 1932).

Type of artefact	Object no.	Fragment	Location (cf. Fig. 5)
Hollow-ground thick-butted axe	1	Edge	2.M.
	2	Fragment	3.H.
	3	Edge fragment, burnt	2.G.
	4	Damaged	2.E.
	5	Damaged	3.E.
	6	Edge	G.V.
		Butt fragment	3.G.
	7	Butt fragment	2.F.
		Edge fragment	2.F.
		Edge fragment	2.E.
	8	Edge fragment	4.G.
		Edge fragment	4.G.
		Fragment	4.G.
Battle axe	9	Butt	2.F.
		Middle	3.E.
		Edge	3.C.

Fig. 3. Battle Axe culture artefacts from the tomb of Gillhög. Locations are plotted in figure 5.

A stone pavement was encountered at the mouth of the passage and six metres outside the entrance. On and under this, hand-sized stones, potsherds and artefacts of stone and flint were recorded. Practically all the objects were damaged; intentionally so, according to FORSSANDER (1942, 15pp.). Burnt human bones were also noted nearest the entrance. RYDBECK (1932, 38pp.) interpreted these as remains which were removed from the tomb and accidentally scorched from contact with fires lit inside or outside of the tomb.

Evidence for Battle Axe presence here consists of fragmentary artefacts below the stone pavement at the passage mouth. As all were fragmentary it is not possible to know the exact number, but one battle axe and a maximum of eight hollow-ground flint axes are present (Fig. 3). At least one of the flint axe fragments is heat damaged and many of the fragments can be refitted. The battle axe (Fig. 4) was found in three parts several metres apart and at different levels (RYDBECK 1932, 41). The edge fragment of axe 6 was found inside the passage near the mouth, while another fragment from the same axe lay outside the tomb. Three fragments from axes 7 and 8 were recovered in different parts of the stone pavement (Fig. 3, Fig. 5).

Conclusion: None of the Battle Axe artefacts were encountered in the chamber and only one sherd was found in the passage; the remaining objects were outside the passage entrance. None were found in connection with human remains. RYDBECK interpreted the sherds and artefacts outside the passage entrance as the result of tomb clearance and/or deposits from ceremonial activities (1932, 36, 39pp.). I believe Gillhög is a very interesting and quite clear

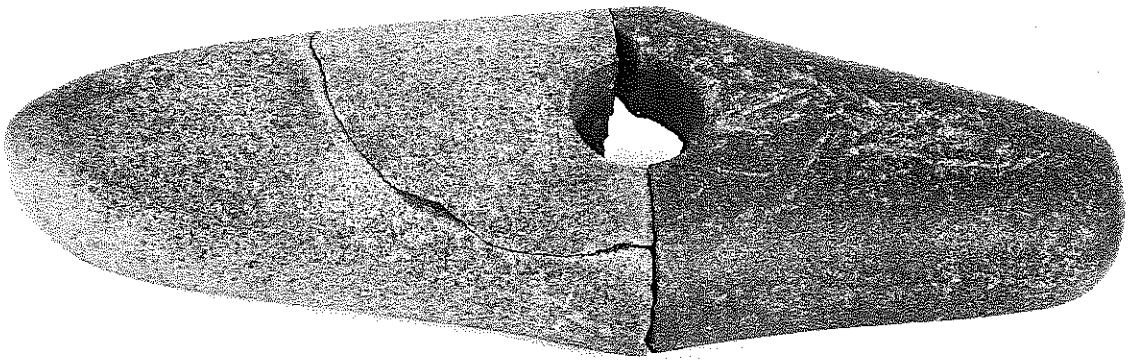

Fig. 4. The damaged battle axe (object 9) from Gillhög, refitted. Figure 5 shows the location of the three fragments (Photo: Katarina Botwid).

example showing Battle Axe use of a passage tomb as a focus for ritual, rather than for burial. The artefacts are fragmented and since many can be refitted we can assume they were damaged at this site. Damaging flint axes and stone battle axes by deliberate breakage and/or heat is also a feature found in Battle Axe contexts at other non-mortuary sites, for example Kverrestad and Svartskylle (Larsson 2000). We can also note that the battle axe at Gillhög is the only example of a battle axe belonging to the Battle Axe culture found in association with a megalithic tomb in the region.

Hög, RAÄ Hög 2:1

Hansen excavated the passage grave at Hög in 1919–1920 (1920, 17). The grave was left to deteriorate until 1966, when it was repaired by Petré/Salomonsson. According to them (1967, 38), traces of a wooden coffin, two bronze swords and the remains of a bronze fibula were recovered from the uppermost level of the chamber. There was ample evidence for a Late Neolithic presence, including at least 11 flint daggers, in both the chamber and the passage (Hansen 1923; Forssander 1933, 103). Fragments of burnt bone were recovered from the passage and the chamber, and a thick layer of potsherds containing 25 to 30 kg of pottery was discovered at the entrance of the tomb (Hansen 1923, 288; Petré/Salomonsson 1967, 38; Tilley 1999, 70).

Five sherds, all belonging to a Battle Axe vessel of type H, were found in connection with Hansen's investigation; two from passage section III (middle passage), two from passage section V (nearest the chamber), and one from chamber section II (the middle section of the chamber) (1920, 22–23; LUHM 20156). According to Hansen (1920, 21pp.), all finds in the tomb were located in the 0.10- to 0.20-metres-thick cultural layer which covered the floor of the chamber and the passage. Petré/Salomonsson (1967, 39) wrote that they encountered further Battle Axe potsherds of the same type both inside and outside of the passage grave (Strömberg 1971b, 360; personal communication Petré 2013).

Conclusion: The Battle Axe sherds are quite large and all appear to come from the same pot. They were found in the cultural layer covering the bottom of the chamber and passage and they were overlain by later activity dating to the Late Neolithic and the Bronze Age. While it is possible that the pot represents a grave good, the condition and size of the sherds suggest instead that it was broken outside the tomb and introduced into the passage and chamber in a fragmentary state. This would indicate ritual deposition rather than burial.

Ingelstorp nr 25, RAÄ Ingelstorp 10:1

Strömberg excavated the passage grave in 1969. A 0.25-metre-thick layer in the chamber was undisturbed and there were indications of partitioning forming five niches. She found two human femurs in one of these. One of the femurs yielded a date within the Battle Axe period: 4140 ± 75 BP (LU 350; Håkansson 1971, 351). However, no Battle Axe artefacts were identified (Strömberg 1973a; 1973c).

Conclusion: A single radiocarbon date from the Battle Axe period is a weak indication of Battle Axe presence, especially as there is an absence of corroborative evidence.

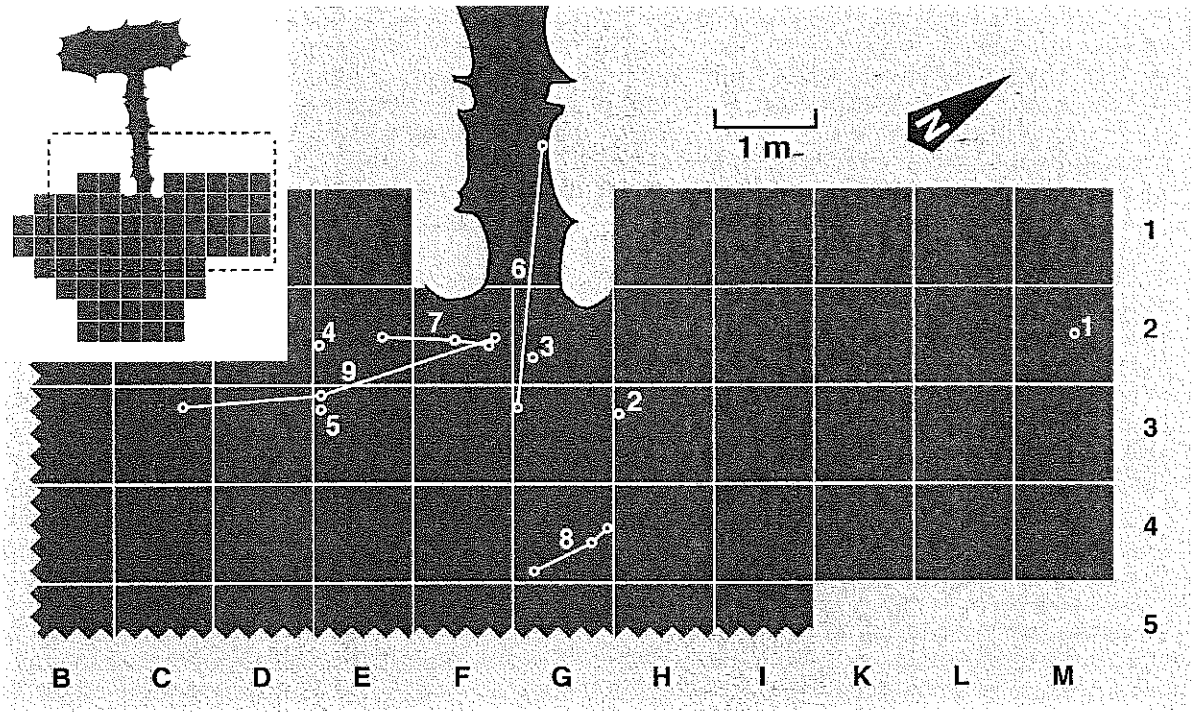

Fig. 5. Plan of Gillhög showing locations of the Battle Axe artefacts listed in table 2. It was possible to rejoin fragments from objects 6, 7, 8 and 9. Note that column J is absent (graphical image: H.Cedmar Brandstedt after Forssander's *(1942) original).*

Knäbäcksdösen, RAÄ Ravlunda 26:1

Hansen investigated this dolmen in 1929. He discovered one hollow-ground thick-butted flint axe with a damaged edge in association with one of the orthostats (Bagge/Kaelas 1952, 35). However, information in the SHM catalogue indicates that it was not part of the dolmen contents (SHM 19440).
Conclusion: The axe is the result of Battle Axe culture activity in the neighborhood of the dolmen, but is not indicative of burial.

Kungsdösen, RAÄ Östra Torp 22:1, 22:2

This monument is a double passage grave excavated by Hansen in 1915 (1918, 29). He included a photograph of a potsherd (Pl XI:7), the decoration of which he described as "pure corded design" (1918, 42). Hansen did not use the Battle Axe culture label but later Rydbeck (1938, 160) identified the sherd as Battle Axe pottery. Potsherds were found both in the passage and outside the entrance (Hansen 1914; 1918, 71); unfortunately, however, it is not clear where the Battle Axe culture sherd was recovered.
Conclusion: A single sherd of Battle Axe pottery lacking solid association with the monument does not lend support to an interpretation of a Battle Axe burial.

Laxmans-Åkarp, RAÄ Fjelie 1:1

The passage grave was excavated in 1922 by Hansen (1922; FMIS Fjelie 1:1). Ebbesen (2006, 777) lists two hollow-ground thick-butted flint axes as proof of Battle Axe presence here but does not provide any reference. Examination of the two thick-butted axes in the LUHM collections showed that LUHM 21059 K:1 is not hollow-ground while the other (LUHM 20159 G:5) is so damaged that it is impossible to ascertain if it is hollow-ground.
Conclusion: Battle Axe presence is unconfirmed.

Öllsjö, RAÄ Skepparslöv 10:1

The Öllsjö passage grave was excavated in 1943 by Forssander and Hommerberg (Hommerberg 1944). They described a partly collapsed passage grave whose chamber had been reused as a Late Neolithic cist grave. The stratigraphic sequence was as follows: at the top level of the chamber they found skeletons from at least 14 individuals, including some children (Hommerberg 1944, 20). Judging from associated artefacts these burials date from the Late Neolithic and the Early Bronze Age. A 0.60-metre layer of clay and stones followed (Strömberg 1971b, 303). A Battle Axe pot was found at a depth of 1.53 metres from the top and "megalithic" pottery (i.e. Funnel Beaker culture) at a depth of

1.62 metres (Hommerberg 1943). The lower layer contained scattered skeletal remains from at least nine individuals plus beads of amber and bone (Hommerberg 1944, 21; Bagge/Kaelas 1952, 15; Tilley 1999, 116). No finds were recorded from the passage entrance (Hommerberg 1944, 21).

Battle Axe presence is indicated by the numerous sherds from a Battle Axe pot belonging to Malmer's type N found at a depth of 1.53 metres (Malmer 1962, 921). The reconstruction shown by Magnusson (1947 fig. 17) was done by the Historical Museum in 1946 (Olsson 1946). Although Bagge/Kaelas (1952, 98) refer to the pot as complete, it appears from the photograph that this description is an exaggeration. However, most of the pot was present.

Conclusion: Although she was unable to distinguish a separate Battle Axe culture level, Magnusson (1947, 159) suggested that the Battle Axe pot represented a Battle Axe burial. Hommerberg (n.d.) describes the location of the pot as coming from the southern part of the chamber, between two visible wallstones and about one metre inside the opening (shown in Bagge/Kaelas 1952, 16). According to Hommerberg the pot was found together with skeletal remains. The evidence therefore indicates a possible burial.

Örenäs, RAÄ Glumslöv 4:1

The chamber of this passage grave was investigated in 1843 by Sven Nilsson (SHM 13421). In the early 1900s, Ferdinand Sjöberg, an estate manager who was interested in archaeology, collected potsherds, flint axes and the remains of at least seven individuals from the passage (Bagge 1952, 429). More systematic excavation was carried out by Bagge in 1951–1952. He recovered more than 40,000 potsherds and edge-damaged and broken axes and chisels (1952; Tilley 1999, 58; SHM 25002).

Battle Axe presence is indicated by one hollow-ground flint axe found by Nilsson in the chamber (Bagge 1952, 428) and one recovered by Bagge from the area at the mouth of the passage (SHM 25002). A bone ring of a type Malmer (1962, 289) ascribes to the Battle Axe culture was found in the passage (SHM 13421).

Conclusion: I do not interpret the broken axe outside the passage mouth as evidence for Battle Axe culture burial. The axe found in the chamber and the bone ring in the passage could be burial remains, but the evidence is weak.

Örum nr 5, RAÄ Hörup 7:1

According to Bagge/Kaelas (1952, 88pp.) the megaliths from this passage tomb were removed in 1913. Hansen visited the location in 1921 and recovered flint artefacts and pottery for which we lack contextual information. Damaged flint axes, blades and points were recovered. Some 1200 potsherds, mostly Funnel Beaker pottery, were registered.

Battle Axe culture evidence consists of three small sherds belonging to three different pots classified as Malmer's type A, GH and J, respectively (1962, 917).

Conclusion: As the sherds are small and lack context it is impossible to determine what form Battle Axe culture activity has taken here but burial is unlikely.

Östra Vram, RAÄ Östra Vram 8:1

The remains of a passage grave at Östra Vram were inspected by C.-A. Moberg in 1939 and excavated by Berta Stjernquist in 1947 (Bagge/Kaelas 1952, 24pp.; Moberg 1946; LUHM 28919). Approximately 2000 potsherds were recovered.

Evidence for Battle Axe presence consists of four rim sherds from three different pots (Bagge/Kaelas 1952, 29; LUHM 28919:48). Bagge/Kaelas (1952, 29) list them as Forssander's style I, Malmer (1962, 924) as type A. Unfortunately, there is no documentation of where the sherds were found.

Conclusion: According to the documentation we have at least three Battle Axe pots represented here, but unfortunately we lack information about their context in relation to the passage grave. Burial cannot be confirmed.

Ramshög/Ramsbjär, RAÄ Löderup 18:1

The passage grave at Ramshög was subject to investigation by Kurk in 1875 and by Hansen in 1930 (Bagge/Kaelas 1952, 47). Strömberg (1971b) completed the investigation in campaigns in 1961, 1964 and 1968–1969. Disarticulated remains from about 40 individuals were recovered from the chamber and passage filling and from deposits outside the tomb (Tilley 1999, 29). In a pit under the chamber floor, 12 bones from a young person and an adult male were discovered. Three radiocarbon dates of bones indicated Funnel Beaker culture activity (Strömberg 1971b, 95pp.). Numerous finds were recovered from the area at the entrance of the passage, including c. 7000 potsherds, four axe fragments, 20 flint blades, burnt and unburnt bones and animal teeth (SHM 19753).

Battle Axe culture presence here is indicated by one sherd of Battle Axe pottery. According to Bagge/Kaelas (1952, 77 and Abb. 57), the potsherd was found seven metres from the mouth of the passage. Bones from at least two individuals, one juvenile and one adult, were found in a pit labelled 1:4. One

bone yielded a date of 4330 ± 65 BP (LU-275), falling slightly earlier than the timespan for the Battle Axe culture. Flint cores, polished fragments, potsherds and a slate knife were also present in the pit (STRÖMBERG 1971b, 105). Identifiable potsherds were of Funnel Beaker type.
Conclusion: Evidence consists of one sherd of Battle Axe pottery. Burial activity is not indicated.

Särslöv, RAÄ Södervidinge 3:1

The passage grave at Särslöv was excavated by HANSEN (1919) in 1919. He found that the chamber was nearly empty, although some parts of the eastern end appeared to be intact. The passage was undisturbed but the capstones were missing. He found a layer of potsherds and flint objects outside the passage entrance.

Indications for Battle Axe culture presence here consist of two artefacts. One thick-butted hollow-ground axe with a damaged edge was found outside the passage mouth. The second consists of sherds from a pot belonging to Malmer's type J:1. (MALMER (1962, 922) also lists pottery from his type GH in this grave but I have been unable to confirm this in any other source.) Sherds from the J:1 pot were encountered in the eastern part of the chamber and in each of the four sections of the passage, but were absent from the layer outside the mouth. Both rim and base sherds were present. HANSEN (1923, 274) noted that the largest number of sherds from the pot lay just inside the entrance opening, which he interpreted to mean that the pot was placed here and subsequently broken, causing the sherds to be spread inwards. All sherds were located in the 10-centimetres-thick bottom layer in the passage (HANSEN 1919; 1923; FORSSANDER 1933).
Conclusion: I interpret the hollow-ground axe from the area outside the tomb as a sign of Battle Axe activity, but not burial. The pot in the passage could be an indication of use of the passage for a Battle Axe burial, however, the lack of any other Battle Axe indications in the tomb does not lend support to such an interpretation.

Stendösa, RAÄ Löderup 46:1

STRÖMBERG (1965, 4) identified the remains at Stendösa as a destroyed passage grave. Her excavations in 1964 and 1969 indicated a heavily-damaged monument where few of the stones were in their original positions (1971b).

Two indications of Battle Axe presence can be identified. The first is a nearly intact polished hollow-ground flint axe found in a pit east of orthostat 5 (Fig. 6). The contents of the pit were disturbed and it is difficult to determine its location in relation to the original position of the chamber. Besides the axe, the pit contained two amber beads, a blade fragment, flint flakes, a hammerstone, three potsherds and one sheep/goat tooth (STRÖMBERG 1971b, 173).

The second indication consists of a radiocarbon dating of poorly preserved bone fragments dating to the Battle Axe culture period: 4040 ±65 BP (LU-351; HÅKANSSON 1971). The bones were identified as right tibia and humerus from a human (STRÖMBERG 1971b, 176). They were found in feature Anl. 1 about 1.5 metres west of stone 1, interpreted as a fallen capstone (Fig. 6). Anl. 1 is described as a pit two metres long, 1.2 metres wide and 0.40 metres deep, covered by a stone packing. The bottom of the pit was lined with knapped flint overlain by a number of larger flint nodules. Many of the nodules were arranged in a row and STRÖMBERG (1971b, 176) suggested they might have supported a wooden construction.
Conclusion: It is not possible to ascertain whether the pit east of orthostat 5 with the flint axe and the feature Anl. 1 have any connection with each other, but it seems safe to assume that both bear some relation to the megalithic tomb. I interpret Anl. 1 to be the remains of a Battle Axe flat-earth burial. The wooden construction Strömberg mentions might be the remains of a wooden coffin. Although grave goods are absent, the size and shape of the pit, the stone lining, and the presence of bone dated to the period all lend support to this interpretation.

Stenhög, RAÄ Lackalänga 14:1

HANSEN (n.d.(2)) investigated the remains of the passage grave in connection with restoration in 1923. Artefacts dating from the Middle Neolithic to the Late Neolithic as well as fragments of human bone were recovered in the chamber and passage. Seven thousand potsherds, damaged flint and stone axes, flint blades and fragments of burnt bone were recovered from the area outside the passage entrance (TILLEY 1999, 70).

Documentation of Battle Axe evidence here is ambiguous. EBBESEN (2006, 778) lists a thick-butted hollow-ground flint axe as evidence for Battle Axe or Pitted Ware presence, with a reference to HANSEN (1938, 25). ANDERSSON (2003, 159) writes that the axe was found in the passage but gives no reference for this information. In his archive report HANSEN (n.d.(2); LUHM 20979) lists the butt of a thick-butted flint axe from the passage area nearest the chamber. He recorded a further four thick-butted flint axes, of which one was slightly hollow-ground, outside the mouth of the tomb. This hollow-ground axe was damaged at the edge.

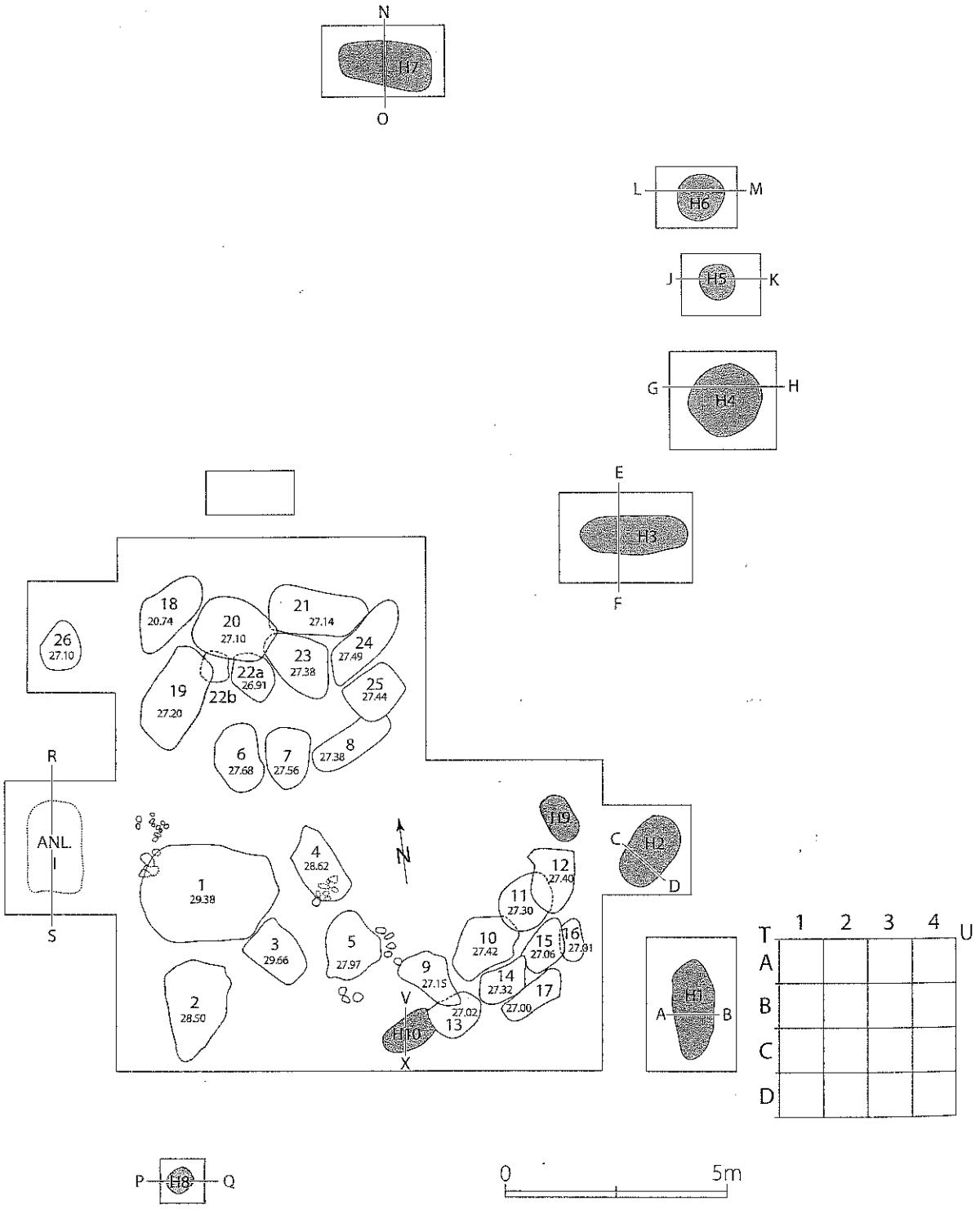

Fig. 6. Plan of Stendösa showing location of feature Anl. 1. H=hearth. Reproduced after Strömberg *1971b, Abb. 106 with permission.*

Conclusion: A single damaged hollow-ground axe at the tomb entrance appears to be the only confirmed evidence for Battle Axe culture activity. There is no sign of Battle Axe burial activity here.

Tågarp, RAÄ Östra Tommarp 4:1

Strömberg (1973b) excavated the Tågarp passage grave in 1970. Upright flagstones divided

the chamber into 13 sections and the chamber floor was covered with a layer of crushed stone. Overlying this were several distinct layers dating to the Late Neolithic containing bones of at least 16 individuals along with artefacts. The outermost part of the passage was blocked by rubble mixed with fragments of skeletons, potsherds, and flint artefacts and flakes. STRÖMBERG's (1971a) interpretation is that most of the contents of the grave had been cleared out previous to the Late Neolithic burial. Some of the material was redeposited outside the passage and some was used to block it. North-east of the passage mouth was a 0.4–0.8-metres-deep sooty layer containing potsherds and flint artefacts. Six features interpreted as hearths were found under this (STRÖMBERG 1971b; TILLEY 1999, 99pp.).

A hollow-ground thick-butted flint axe with edge damage, sherds of Battle Axe pottery at the entrance and a radiocarbon date to the Battle Axe period are the indications for Battle Axe activity at this tomb. The axe was found lying across the entrance to the chamber in association with a floor level (STRÖMBERG 1971a, 56). STRÖMBERG (1971a, 71) notes that among the sherds outside the tomb, some were of a typical Battle Axe type, although she does not specify the number. The radiocarbon dating was done on collagen from poorly-preserved human bone fragments found in the rubble blocking in the passage. The result was 4230±80 BP (LU-473, HÅKANSSON 1972, 394).

Conclusion: The hollow-ground axe in the chamber and human bone in the blocking are of interest. STRÖMBERG (1971a) suggested that the material in the blocking was cleared out from the chamber. Her interpretation for the axe in the chamber is that it was overlooked when this clearing was done; therefore, it could be *in situ*. She also suggested that some of the artefacts outside the tomb were the result of tomb clearance, in which case the Battle Axe sherds outside might have come from the tomb. It is theoretically possible that the human bone, the axe and the Battle Axe potsherds are the remains of a Battle Axe burial in the chamber.

Trollasten, RAÄ Stora Köpinge 20:1

The dolmen at Trollasten was investigated in 1855 and again in 1965. The chamber was paved with a floor of crushed stone. Overlying this was a sandy layer five centimetres thick containing skeletal remains, amber beads, and flint artefacts. Above this was a 0.40-metres-thick disturbed layer. This layer contained burnt bone and artefacts from the Late Neolithic. Above this was a 0.10-metres-thick layer containing large numbers of artefacts from the Viking Age, including 1200 potsherds. The dolmen was equipped with a short passage; outside of the entrance a low cairn/platform structure was found. Large quantities of artefacts were recorded on and in the platform, including 5800 potsherds representing about 200 pots, 26 axe fragments, and other flint artefacts. Small depositions of burnt human bone together with whole and broken axes and other flint artefacts were recovered in 11 places in the cairn. Many of the broken axes were fire-damaged and the fact that fragments from the same axes were found in different piles led TILLEY (1999, 112) to conclude that they had been deliberately destroyed (STRÖMBERG 1966; 1970; TILLEY 1999, 111pp.).

Battle Axe indications consist of 24 sherds from a pot of Malmer's type E. They were found in the 0.50-metres-thick disturbed layer inside the chamber (STRÖMBERG 1968, 48). STRÖMBERG (1966, 37) also mentions a "concave-ground" (Sw. konkavslipad) axe in deposition 3 outside the dolmen (cf. STRÖMBERG 1968, 124). In an attempt to verify this I examined the 34 flint axes registered in the LUHM collections for Trollasten. None of them is clearly hollow-ground; two of them (374 and 473) are butt fragments which might have belonged to hollow-ground axes, but as they are fragmentary it is impossible to determine.

Conclusion: The Battle Axe potsherds in the chamber indicate that the Battle Axe culture is present, but since they are not *in situ* burial activity cannot be confirmed.

Västra Hoby, RAÄ Västra Hoby 3:2

FORSSANDER (1937, 3) noted that the chamber of the passage grave at Västra Hoby had been emptied in the nineteenth century, with the exception of one corner where a broken pot was found. The passage contained mostly Late Neolithic finds plus a small number of potsherds, a damaged flint axe, and amber beads (TILLEY 1999, 72). Västra Hoby is best known for the size of the deposits at the entrance of the passage; according to TILLEY (1999, 72) the number of sherds exceeds that of any passage grave in north-western Europe. Deposits reached a depth of 0.40 metres and in addition to potsherds there were 13 flint and groundstone axes as well as numerous other flint artefacts. The axes were damaged or broken (FORSSANDER 1935; 1936; 1937; TILLEY 1999, 72).

Due to faulty documentation, the presence of Battle Axe activity is uncertain. ANDERSSON (2003, 159) describes a fragment of a thick-butted probably hollow-ground axe from the grave, with a reference to FORSSANDER (1937). However, the archive report at the Historical Museum does not list such an axe among the finds. EBBESEN (2006, 778) lists a pot of Malmer's type A indicating Battle Axe or Pitted Ware culture at Västra Hoby. His reference is FORSSANDER (1936), presumably referring to the cord-decorated pot in FORSSANDER's fig. 10 (1936, 1pp.). However, although he acknowl-

edges similarities in decoration between such a pot and Battle Axe pottery, FORSSANDER classifies it as a Funnel Beaker pot (1936, 30pp.). Later in his article Forssander concludes that although there are several Battle Axe flat-earth burials close to the Västra Hoby passage grave, the tomb was not used during the Battle Axe period (1936, 50).
Conclusion: The presence of members of the Battle Axe culture at Västra Hoby is unconfirmed.

Viktorshög söder, RAÄ Glumslöv 12:3

The southernmost of the two Viktorshög passage graves was subject to investigation by Sven Nilsson in 1842 (FMIS Glumslöv 12:3) and by Bagge and Kaelas in 1952 (SHM 24761). The chamber and passage as well as an area outside the passage mouth were excavated. There were few recorded finds from inside the tomb, but TILLEY (1999, 56) cites a figure of more than 7000 sherds on and between the stones in the stone packing at the entranceway and 4300 sherds beneath.

Battle Axe presence is indicated by a thick-butted hollow-ground flint axe found outside the tomb passage (SHM 24761). MALMER (1962, 917) also lists type J pottery in his catalogue but provides no further information. I have been unable to confirm the pottery.
Conclusion: Battle Axe culture presence here is elusive and confined to the area outside the tomb. The SHM catalogue (SHM 24761) states that the pottery, axe fragments and other flint objects found in the layer under the stone packing seemed to be intentionally damaged, but based on the documentation we cannot determine if the hollow-ground axe was among the damaged objects. Certainly, burial is not indicated here.

Conclusions

Although there is evidence for Battle Axe culture presence at many of the Scanian megaliths, it has not been possible to find incontrovertible evidence that any of it relates to burial. The most convincing example of Battle Axe burial associated with a megalithic tomb is found at Stendösa, in the form of what I interpret to be a flat-earth burial placed outside the megalithic tomb (Fig. 6). While the burial probably had some connection with the megalithic tomb, the grave is not an example of reuse of a megalithic tomb for burial. The hollow-ground flint axe found beside or under a skeleton in the passage of Carlshögen may be an example of reuse of the passageway of a megalithic tomb for Battle Axe burial. Sherds from the nearly complete Battle Axe culture pot found in the cultural layer covering the bottom of the passage and chamber of the Hög passage grave may represent a Battle Axe burial, but they could also be interpreted as an offering placed in the passage. At Tågarp, the hollow-ground axe found in the chamber in combination with the human bone in the rubble blocking the passage and the Battle Axe culture pottery outside the tomb are of interest. If indeed the axe is *in situ* and the bones and pottery are interpreted as the result of later clearance, we might interpret this as the remains of a Battle Axe burial inside the chamber. MAGNUSSON (1947) claimed to distinguish a separate Battle Axe culture level in the chamber at Öllsjö, but unfortunately I was unable to confirm this in any of the documentation to which I had access.

Slim evidence indicating possible Battle Axe burial comes from Gantofta boställe, Särslöv, and Trollasten. At these tombs there is solid evidence for Battle Axe objects inside the tomb's interior but subsequent disturbance makes it difficult to determine the original context of the finds. The hollow-ground axe purportedly found by Sven Nilsson in the chamber of Örenäs is weak evidence for possible Battle Axe culture burial in the tomb.

The weakest evidence for Battle Axe presence is found at the megalithic tombs of Fjälkinge nr. 9, Knäbäcksdösen, Kungsdösen, Östra Vram, Ramshög, Stenhög, and Viktorshög söder. At these tombs, scattered sherds of Battle Axe pottery or a single hollow-ground axe outside the tomb are the only signs of Battle Axe presence.

Finally, I was unable to confirm any evidence for Battle Axe presence at the tombs of Fjärestad nr. 1, Laxmans-Åkarp, Örum nr. 5 or Västra Hoby.

My conclusion is that most of the Battle Axe artefacts we find in connection with the tombs are the result of ritual activity carried out with the tomb as a focal point, rather than burial. We may note, for instance, that only one battle axe of Battle Axe culture type has been recovered from a megalithic tomb in this region (of a total of two according to MALMER 1962, tab. 33). Since battle axes are an otherwise common artefact in Battle Axe culture burials (MALMER 1962, 251), their absence in this material confirms that burial is unlikely. The Battle Axe flint axes and the pottery found in connection with the tombs are damaged, in some cases apparently deliberately so. At Gillhög we saw that the fragmentary battle axe and fragments from eight axes could be refitted, indicating that they were brought to the tomb as whole objects or at least in a less fragmentary state. Similar behaviour has been demonstrated at other Battle Axe culture sites such as Kverrestad and Svartskylle, where there is extensive evidence for deliberate destruction through

mechanical means and/or fire, but no indication of mortuary activity (LARSSON 2000).

It would appear that there was certainly some kind of "mental" awareness of the imposing megalithic tombs on the part of the members of the Battle Axe people. The tombs functioned as a focal point for ritual activity and in one instance perhaps the tomb "attracted" a flat-earth burial as can be seen at Stendösa. However, in my opinion members of the Battle Axe culture did not regard the megalithic tombs erected by the Funnel Beaker people as suitable repositories for interment of their dead. The proper place for a Battle Axe culture burial was in a pit under the ground, not in a megalithic monument.

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Deborah Olausson
Department of Archaeology and Ancient History
Lund University
Box 117
SE-221 00 Lund
Sweden